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PORTLAND

'I can't breathe,' man tells ICE agents in Spanish five times during Portland arrest

Updated: Oct. 21, 2025, 12:30 p.m. | Published: Oct. 21, 2025, 12:23 p.m.

["I can't breathe," man tells ICE agents in Spanish five times during his arrest in Portland.](#)



On Sept. 11, a motorist shot a video of ICE agents arresting Víctor José Brito Vallejo on a Northeast Portland street.

Brito Vallejo pleaded for air as one agent lay on top of him and three other kneeling agents held him down. In the video, Brito Vallejo didn't appear to be resisting.

"I can't breathe," he told the agents in Spanish five different times.

Immigration officials declined to comment on Brito Vallejo's case.

His wife, who asked not to be named given her legal status, could be heard on the video screaming, "Help me, help me" as she sat in the car in the middle of the street near the intersection of Northeast Clackamas Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

The two were on a DoorDash delivery run at the time, she said.

The confrontation is an example of the Trump administration's increased immigration crackdown in Oregon in recent months, which The Oregonian/OregonLive detailed on Saturday.

This month, ICE officers also pushed into a Gresham apartment where a 24-year-old woman and her 3-month-old baby were staying with her stepfather and brother. ICE agents drew their rifles at the family and arrested the stepfather and brother, even though they weren't who they were searching for.

ICE agents also held a group of teenagers at a Dutch Bros Coffee in Hillsboro at gunpoint this month, according to local law enforcement records.

In the case of the Northeast Portland arrest, the 34-year-old mother of three said her family fled Venezuela in 2023 because her husband was facing persecution. The couple and their children had only been in Portland for about five months after moving here from New York, she said.

New York is a sanctuary state, but they came here because Oregon is a sanctuary state where they believed they would have more protections, she said.

After her husband's arrest, she and her children — ages 15, 12 and 8 — moved out of their place and lived in their car for about three weeks. They're now staying in someone's basement, but her children haven't gone to school for nearly a month, she said.

"I have a lot of fear," she said.

Elizabeth Cox, the Portland resident who filmed Brito Vallejo's arrest, said she was driving home from a doctor's appointment when she saw multiple vehicles on the street. Her instincts told her to turnaround.

"It didn't seem normal. You could see it was unmarked cars," she said. "I could see as I was driving past that someone was being pulled out of a car."

Cox said she decided to film the episode because she's heard that the most helpful thing to do if you encounter ICE arrests is to record them so the people involved have it for their lawyers.

"I just wish that I had gotten the entire event on film because the act of pulling him out of his car as I was driving by did feel just incredibly violent," she said.

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